United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

1. During the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, a top-down approach was employed which brought about economic growth, but only for some members of society. The masses of people living in poverty did not benefit during those years. Now, at the beginning of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the gap between the few who possess the world's wealth and those who live in extreme poverty is deeper. We urgently need a process that will enhance a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches towards development, peace and security, with the goal of ensuring everyone a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.

2. The report of the Secretary General (A/64/157, para. 17) states that:

> "Social integration entails promoting a people-centred approach to poverty eradication. ... Their participation should be considered not as an add-on

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

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element, but rather as central to poverty reduction efforts, so that these strategies and programmes can be designed in a way that respects the dignity and culture of people living in poverty, uses their skills, knowledge and creativity and assists them to organize and become educated about their rights."

3. "Placing people at the centre of our concerns for development" was the new consensus established by the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. People living in poverty feel powerless and alienated because they do not have say in the decisions that affect their lives. They lack structures that provide opportunities to become active citizens and exercise their rights and responsibilities. The electoral constituencies of the different levels in representative democracy are so big that the people living in poverty, the "small people", have no forum for meaningful participation, for their "small voices" to be heard. Effective and sustained participation can take place only when people are ensured a viable forum to have a say in decision-making that affects their lives.

4. The most telling touchstone that identifies exclusion or non-integration is the way participation of various sorts is denied to people, especially participation in decision-making and in governance. In many places people have no access to forums of decision-making because of poverty, race or gender. This perpetuates exclusion. People need to have forums where they can come together to discuss their situation, identify the root causes of their problems, make decisions, set time-bound goals and monitor the processes. When people search together, plan together, implement together and monitor together, they cannot but be included and integrated. Such forums have to be accessible to all. They must also be the right size so that the excluded, the poor and the powerless find them friendly.

5. Irene Khan, Secretary-General of Amnesty International, in her book *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights*, argues that people can only truly have a say in their own future in an environment where respect for basic rights is assured. This is what is called a voice-enabling environment. She also states that the voice-enabling environment encourages diverse groups to organize and make their views known: "That is the surest way to create an engaged citizenry, and to nurture a culture where conversations about development, economic policies and budget choices can flourish".

6. The "Shared Societies Project" of the Club de Madrid, emphasizes, in its commitment II, the necessity for inclusive processes

> "Create opportunities for minorities and marginalized groups and communities to be consulted about their needs and their perception of the responsiveness of state and community structures to meet those needs".

7. Commitment II calls for the following actions:

- Establish consultative councils on which all identity groups are represented and with the statutory right to be consulted on the impact of government policies.
- Encourage identity groups to create representative bodies with which government and other identity groups can dialogue to explore and understand issues and concerns that affect those groups.

- Create systems of community meetings that allow community members to express their views and air their grievances.

- Create the statutory duty of public bodies to include representatives of smaller identity groups in their boards and other decision-making bodies.

8. Some examples of success stories of social inclusion include: the experiments of neighbourhood assemblies of some states in India (see www.kudumbashree.org and www.ncnworld.org); the children's parliaments and their multi-tiered federations in India (www.childrenparliament.info); local Solidarity Governance of Porto Alegre (http://www2.portoalegre.rs.gov.br/observatorio/) and the Participation Law of Bolivia (http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background_papers/2003/HDR2003_Calderon_Pinc.pdf). The common trait evident in all these success stories, which paved the way for widespread inclusion, is that these forums for participatory decision-making are at the neighbourhood level. The non-governmental organizations play a significant role in all these examples of ensuring broad social inclusion.

Recommendations

Governments should:

- Bring forums for political, social and economic decision-making down to the grass-roots level by means of territorially inclusive neighbourhood forums. It is imperative that such forums remain small-sized, face-to-face communities at every level so that the small voices of the marginalized and the weak do not get drowned out or lost, and thus go unlistened to, or that people living in poverty remain without a voice.

- Ensure that such neighbourhood forums are federated at various levels of governance for wider reach and impact.

- Promote partnerships of women, youth, people with disabilities, indigenous people, older people and migrants through their networks based on this type of neighbourhood forum so that they can all be involved in the process of becoming active citizens.

- Initiate a process for practical and inclusive citizenship training for children by organizing territorially responsive children's neighbourhood parliaments and federations.

- Constantly reinforce such territorially inclusive neighbourhood forums through a process of convergence, whereby whatever can be done is done through such forums (for example, organizing self-help groups of poor women as is done in Kerala and organizing community health through neighbourhood health communities, neighbourhood-based planning and implementation and environmental monitoring).

- Utilize the process of smaller neighbourhood groups and a federated structure to foster universal inclusion, assuring the fulfilment of the principles of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) by upholding the value of maximum participation of people living in poverty.

- Make participatory strategies a regular part of their processes through various means, such as including participation as part of job descriptions, offering incentives for success in reaching out to those in poverty and ensuring that progress is measured.
- Partner with non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage people living in poverty in processes affecting their lives.

Note: The present statement is endorsed by Congregations of St. Joseph, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Women Lawyers. International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council, International Peace Research Association, UNANIMA International, Vivat International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement
Social integration of minority populations

1. In 1995, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action set out a vision of creating "a society for all" in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities has an active role to play. Social integration was described as both a goal and a process that societies engage in to advance social development.

2. Fifteen years after Copenhagen, many individuals and social groups remain marginalized and excluded in many countries. In many cases, the excluded suffer from multiple disadvantages which often include poverty, lack of education, poor housing, poor health, lack of access to services and discrimination.

3. Ninety per cent of the world's countries have a minority population of at least 10 per cent (Club de Madrid, 2009). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 200 countries have significant minority ethnic or religious communities. Almost 900 million people belong to groups that experience disadvantages as a result of their minority standing.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

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4. Although specific historical, economic, social, political and geographic factors contribute to varied experiences of minority groups in different countries, common problems are identifiable. Often, these problems are related to the existence of structures or systems that have the effect of perpetuating the marginalization of minority groups from decision-making and of unfairly benefiting majority populations or dominant groups in the economic, social and political life of the country.

5. The Committee for Social Development conducted a survey on social integration in the summer of 2009. The more than 200 responses from many parts of the world where our constituents work identify the same societal attitudes accompanied by discriminatory laws and practices which contribute to exclusion from education, employment, housing, health care and decision-making as major barriers experienced by minority populations to social integration. One respondent stated: "People want to belong, to be persons who count, to be consulted and to have their say in matters important to them. Without structures that offer them this scope they feel helpless, lost and as nobodies. When they feel helpless, they attach themselves to divisive and exclusive identities" (Neighborhood Community Network, India).

6. Although, in its origin, Hungary's Minorities Law was explicitly assimilationist and the focus of controversy since its inception, it was hailed as an innovative response to the needs of its minorities. The Council of Europe called the provision for self-government "rare" and the achievements of the law "highly progressive".

7. The central organizing principle of the law is cultural autonomy for all national and ethnic minority groups. Under the law, minority groups can preserve their own languages, culture and traditions. The provision for minority education and minority self-government strengthens the unique identity of each group. Over the past 20 years, 12 different minority populations took advantage of this law to enter into the Hungarian political system at both local and national levels. Members of the Roma community, which is Hungary's largest as well as its most socio-economically disadvantaged and marginalized minority, participated in a survey whose results suggest that minority self-governance has begun to reconfigure the shape of local politics. It can be an important step towards local democratization, political participation and minority self-determination and local development (The Hungarian Quarterly, vol. 40, No. 155, Autumn 1999; Fact Sheets on Hungary No. 3/2000, http://www.mfa.gov.hu).

8. The European Commission looked specifically for successful Roma integration at its peer review meeting in October 2006. The experience in Aviles, Spain, which has been in process since 2000 was put forward. Roma communities were rehoused out of shanty towns into standard accommodations with non-Roma populations. In addition to rehousing, there were improvements in employment, education and health, including several factors that have made a difference: commitment by government departments at various levels; municipal leadership; a long-term approach; an integrated strategy addressing multiple factors affecting exclusion; client-centred services; and monitoring of progress. "A crucial component underpinning the effectiveness of these initiatives is the high level of participation, commitment and involvement of Roma organizations and beneficiaries, coupled

with the high expectations and enthusiasm of non-Roma personnel working for it" (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/index_eu.htm).

9. The Australian Government has recently launched the Australian Public Service social inclusion and policy design and delivery toolkit (www.socialinclusion.gov.au) "The toolkit aims to help in the task of translating social inclusion principles and priorities into the daily practice of government and public administration" (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Inclusion, Julia Gillard). The toolkit contributes to the achievement of the Government's vision for a socially inclusive society in which, "... all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity and capability to learn, work, engage and have a voice ...". The toolkit could be replicated and adapted in other countries, including its sound design of: the social inclusion situation in Australia, its six-step method of policy design and delivery of services, practical examples and additional resources.

10. The Club de Madrid's "Shared Societies Project" outlines a vision and principles involved in building shared societies, and a "world safe for differences". It focuses on the role of leadership in working with others to create ... "peaceful, democratic and prosperous (societies) when leaders and citizens recognize the economic, social and political value of diversity and actively build a shared society" (Shared Societies Project). It includes 10 areas of policy commitments that are needed to build such a society.

Recommendations for Governments

- Reaffirm the commitment to Copenhagen and the promotion and protection of all human rights.
- Review existing national and local laws and policies and eliminate those that are discriminatory.
- Commit to long-term action plans that transform policy and to social services that include and are of benefit to all minority groups within the country.
- Involve minority groups in establishing educational processes that expand their opportunities and capabilities for employment and livelihood and their active participation in the life of the community.

Note:

This statement has been endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Presentation Association, Loretto Community, Salesian Missions and Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62340 (E) 221209

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Statement

Meeting the human need for water as a means to social integration

1. Social integration/inclusion is a dynamic with multifaceted dimensions ranging from capacity to meet basic human needs to addressing complex cultural, religious, language and educational barriers. Since the inception of the Organization, the Member States have set in writing, from the Charter of the United Nations onwards, the call to respect the rights and dignity of every individual human being. At the completion of the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 promises were made in the principles and goals to "... give the highest priority in national, regional and international policies and actions to the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition based on full participation by all. To this end, we will create a framework for action to: (a) Place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively". See *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7).

2. In his address to the General Assembly on 23 September 2009, President Obama made the following statement, "Now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges ... if we are honest with ourselves we are not living up to our responsibility ... I say this not to sow fear, but to state a fact: the magnitude of our challenges has yet to be met by the measure of our actions".

3. Persons who lack access to safe water and sanitation remain excluded from the most elementary opportunities for social integration and inclusion. It is well documented that people, living where water is not provided and protected by local, regional or national policies, women and children especially, spend their days walking to gather sufficient water for the family. They are denied, due to this investment of time and energy, the right to attend school and maintain employment, and often suffer from preventable water-borne diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that worldwide 884 million people live without safe drinking water, which is one person in eight. It is predicted that this number will rise, however, due to the effects of climate change. In addition, another 2.5 billion people live without sanitation; 85 per cent to 90 per cent of diarrhoeal diseases are preventable with safe drinking water and hand washing with soap. In a world which has sent people to the moon, developed smart cars and robotic surgery, it is unconscionable to allow this situation to continue.

4. Due in some measure to commitments Member States made to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the Monterrey Consensus, there has been some progress in the provision of water. Increased official development assistance (ODA), trade for development, investments and debt relief have assisted developing countries to use their monies in improving their own infrastructure. However, with the onset of the fuel, food and financial crisis leaving countries scrambling to stabilize their own financial systems, the focus has shifted from international commitments to national interests. The interface of social, financial and sustainable development issues is well recognized. Models designed to promote sustained cooperation and collaboration among the various stakeholders should be forthcoming at local, regional, national and international levels. The

United Nations should provide a single forum for dialogue on issues of common concern, with the goal of moving towards regular and substantive sessions.

5. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, in his keynote address to the Second Committee of the General Assembly on 12 October 2009, gave credit to the many successful working models that have been developed to assist in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He was both positive and hopeful that it is possible to make the goal of halving those living in extreme poverty by 2015 because of these tried and proven methodologies. The missing components have been political will and financing.

6. We recommend that having basic human needs satisfied, specifically the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation, will promote social integration and inclusion. Governments, such as Panama, Ethiopia, Uganda, Gambia, South Africa and Uruguay, which have incorporated the right to water in their constitutions, are to be commended. For some it has been an ongoing struggle to provide for the implementation of this right. It was heartening to learn of Denmark's recent gift of $94 million to Uganda over the next five years in order to assist that country in keeping up its efforts to provide water and sanitation for its citizens.

7. We take heart that several United Nations meetings have named partnerships as being essential in order to redress the inequalities that divide our world. Structural adjustment programmes, international cooperation and partnerships (see Copenhagen Commitments 8 and 10) are a means to relieve the misery of almost one-third of our sisters and brothers living in extreme poverty.

8. Some models of effective partnerships for the provision of water and sanitation include:

(a) WaterAid whose vision is "a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. This mission is to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities. WaterAid partners with and influences decision makers to maximize an effective impact". WaterAid equips women, children and marginalized groups to petition Governments to build, maintain and repair their local water supplies. Successful projects are located in Asia, Africa and the Pacific region. In Ghana, WaterAid has signed a formal agreement with 11 district assemblies setting out responsibilities for planning and implementing water and sanitation plans. WaterAid will provide technical and financial assistance to local governments; another partner non-governmental organization (NGO) will support the preparation and implementation of the water and sanitation plans; and local governments will provide oversight and leadership in the planning and delivery of the services. The district assemblies believe the agreement will enable them to carry out their legal responsibility of developing water and sanitation services for their communities (www.wateraid.org);

(b) ProNet introduced community-led total sanitation to the Accra region of Ghana, an area where people were underinformed about the importance of hygiene and sanitation. ProNet entered the community on an informal basis to instruct people on appropriate hygiene and sanitation practices in an easy to understand manner. Literacy education was culturally and language sensitive and appropriate to the people of the community. Latrines were constructed by the people themselves. According to the local population, the latrines have helped keep flies away; fewer diseases occur; and less contamination seeps into bodies of water;

(c) WomenAid International is another development partner whose work is to provide people with drinking water pipes, irrigation networks and water reservoirs (www.womenaid.org);

(d) The Millennium Villages project involves village people using simple solutions to develop their communities, including water projects (www.millenniumvillages.org).

Policy recommendations for Governments:

- Place people at the centre of development by inviting them to be equal partners at the decision-making table and through every step of the process.
- Promote ongoing reform of the unfair conditionalities imposed on developing countries by the international financial institutions.
- Choose well-established, credible partners with whom to collaborate in efforts to provide water and sanitation for all.
- Specify clear limits on private ownership and control of water resources. All public/private partnerships in the delivery of water and sanitation must be monitored to ensure that they have a built-in pro-poor component.
- Member States must allocate domestic resources and finances for the provision, management, maintenance, and sustainability of water and sanitation systems.

Note: Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Franciscans International and Congregations of St. Joseph; by non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregations of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Federation on Ageing, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International; non-governmental organizations with special roster status: Loretto Community.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Submitted by: Congregations of St. Joseph, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic Social Council, UNANIMA International and the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62365 (E) 241209

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Statement

Gender and social inclusion

1. It is 15 years since the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, in which world leaders committed themselves "to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights ... and participation of all people" and to "ensure the protection and full integration into the economy and society of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons" (see A/CONF.166/9, annex I). This goal of social inclusion has yet to be realized. Persistent gender inequality excludes half the population from many areas of social life.

2. The world is experiencing the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, and this has weakened the possibility of achieving the social and economic development goals necessary for social inclusion. Multiple crises, economic, food and energy crises, "are unfolding against the background of the longer-term predicament of climate change. Climate change and its economic, environmental and social impacts will pose an unprecedented challenge to the cohesion of societies".[1] Women, particularly women living in poverty, bear a disproportionate burden of these impacts and do not have the resources to mitigate them.

Poverty

3. Eradicating poverty is one of the greatest challenges the world faces and is key to delivering social inclusion. Addressing the feminization of poverty must be a priority. The World Bank estimates that 1.4 billion people were living in extreme poverty in 2005,[2] and this is increasing with the current crises. The International Labour Organization states that 70 per cent of the world's absolute poor are women.[3] It is imperative that social protection mechanisms be put into place and basic human rights upheld. In the short term, measures such as cash transfer programmes (see A/HRC/11/9) and microfinance are needed, as they give some social protection and place resources in the hands of women. These are significant means of addressing economic vulnerability and so reduce the risk of families being exploited by traffickers.

4. Globalization has opened up opportunities for economic growth and development but has also caused increasing poverty and unemployment and has led to social disintegration, with a widening of the gap between rich and poor. Taken as a whole, macroeconomic policies[2] maintain gender inequalities, impede the economic empowerment of women and exacerbate the plight of people living in poverty. An "economics of solidarity" that aims first to serve the needs of human communities, and not exclusively to promote the economic gain of a few, is needed.

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[1] Commission for Social Development, forty-seventh session, Chairperson's summary.

[2] *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.7).

[3] International Labour Organization, Gender Promotion Programme, available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems; accessed 7 November 2007.

Education

5. It is essential that the right to education for girls and women be fulfilled. The achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2 is a priority in moving towards the goals of poverty eradication, maternal and child health and combating HIV/AIDS. Every year of schooling increases a girl's earning power by 10 to 20 per cent,[4] but girls in developing countries are the most likely to be excluded. Engagement in education goes beyond capacity to earn and enhanced economic development; it is a protective factor against impoverishment, promotes social inclusion of women and girls and has intergenerational benefits for the community. Any reduction in this social spending will have far-reaching social and human costs and erode the gains made in social inclusion through instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Trafficking

6. One of the most excluded groups in society is trafficked women and children, whose integration into either their country of origin or country of destination is extremely limited.

7. Social exclusion and exploitation of trafficked persons is a systemic problem. "The link between trafficking and inequality, the nexus between trafficking and entrenched gender and racial discrimination, the connection between trafficking and sexual exploitation, including through prostitution, and the link between trafficking and inefficient migration regimes that push migrants into the hands of traffickers"[5] must be addressed. Fulfilment of Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3 would lessen the economic vulnerability of women and reduce the conditions easily exploited for trafficking and the prostitution of women.

8. Our non-governmental organizations working in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa report that the global recession has not only been a financial crisis but has also resulted in increased levels of violence and an escalation of trafficking. Research by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, which reported that the global financial crisis had led to an increase in the number of women entering the sex trafficking industry in Cambodia, corroborates these grass-roots observations.[6] Further research is needed to ascertain the extent of this linkage.

Violence against women

9. Gender discrimination and violence against women are serious barriers to social inclusion. It is unacceptable that globally up to six out of every ten women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes.[7] Gender-based violence is an abuse of a woman's human rights, limits her participation in society and has extensive consequences for her family. Preventive measures must be implemented through human rights education for women and girls and education of

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[4] Ricardo Hausmann, Laura Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2009* (Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2009).

[5] Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, statement at the United Nations special event on "Giving voice to the victims and survivors of human trafficking", 22 October 2009.

[6] See www.no-trafficking.org.

[7] See www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women.

men and boys regarding relationships and male identity. There needs to be an end to impunity for perpetrators of violence against women and girls so that human rights are upheld in both customary law and national legislation. Ending gender-based violence and discrimination are critical to social integration and need to be enshrined in both law and practice.

Good practices

10. Gender-sensitive social policies and budgeting are key to fostering the social integration of women. Such social inclusion and gender empowerment are evidenced in the policy adopted by the African Union.[8] This needs to be replicated.

11. We offer two examples of programmes that promote social inclusion of women. In the tribal community of Karanje, India, self-help groups have led to the empowerment of women through microcredit schemes. The empowerment of the women further led to involvement in local self-government groups known as "Gram Sabhas" and "Panchayats". Women participate in meetings and are trained to speak for their rights. Some are elected as members of the Panchayats and participate in decision-making, thus improving their own lives and the lives of others in the community.

12. Ruhama, a non-governmental organization in Ireland, has established a programme that supports the social integration of trafficked women. The staff work to build trusting relationships and support for them to recover from trauma. Medical care, legal advice and programmes in English, computers and participating in Irish life are provided. Women are accompanied through the process of seeking asylum and assisted in accessing accommodation. They grow in confidence and move on to work or further education and training. This programme demonstrates how long-term support with multifaceted programmes can assist in the social integration of vulnerable women.

13. These case studies demonstrate that policies and programmes that are people-centred and locally based, promote self-determination and provide opportunity for livelihood improvement, enhance social integration and build more inclusive communities.

Recommendations

14. Social inclusion of half the world's population is not an option; it is a necessity and it is a right. Gender empowerment, economic justice and gender equity must be embedded in public policies and programmes if there is to be an inclusive society. We recommend that Governments:

(a) Focus their efforts and policies to address the root causes and the feminization of poverty and do so with the active participation of persons living in poverty;

(b) Ensure that people living in poverty have access to productive resources and social protection to enable them to participate in society and limit their vulnerability to exploitation;

[8] African Union, Common position on social integration.

(c) Promote effective laws against trafficking, prostitution and related forms of sexual exploitation, including provisions criminalizing the demand for trafficking and prostitution, based on the principles of human rights and gender equality;

(d) Confront gender-based violence and institutionalized gender discrimination by implementing laws and programmes that promote the gender equality that is essential for social integration;

(e) Ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in this thirtieth anniversary year of the Convention;

(f) Include a gender analysis of all policies and ensure gender-responsive budgeting;

(g) Recognize that global social justice is a public good beneficial to all and that developed countries must contribute by maintaining their official development assistance commitments and implementing fair multilateral trade policies.

Note: The present statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): Franciscans International; and the following non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with ECOSOC: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Dominican Leadership Conference; International Federation of Women Lawyers; International Federation of Women in Legal Careers; International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Loretto Community; Salesian Missions; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the Bahá'í International Community (United Nations Office), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62371 (E) 231209

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Statement

Transforming collective deliberation: valuing unity and justice

1. The most compelling model for the integration of the world's cultures and peoples may lie in the complexity and coordination that characterize the human body. Within this organism, millions of cells, with extraordinary diversity of form and function, collaborate to make human existence possible. Every small cell has its part to play in maintaining a healthy body; from its inception, each is linked to a lifelong process of giving and receiving. In the same manner, efforts around the world to build communities guided by values of cooperation and reciprocity are challenging notions that human nature is essentially selfish, competitive and driven by material considerations. The growing consciousness of a common humanity lying beneath the surface of our different identities is redefining our relationships with each other as peoples, as nations and as co-stewards of our natural environment. Whether stubbornly opposed in some societies or welcomed elsewhere as a release from suffocating oppression, the understanding that we are all part of an indivisible human family is becoming the standard by which our collective efforts are judged.

2. In this time of transition to a new social order, processes of social integration are gathering momentum alongside related processes of disintegration. Collapsed moral foundations, outworn institutions and a sense of disillusionment foment chaos and decline in the social order while, at the same time, integrative forces raise up new bases for collaboration and transform the nature and scope of collective action. Such integrative processes are evidenced by growing social networks facilitated, inter alia, by information technology; expanded suffrage and formal participation in governance; collective approaches to knowledge generation and dissemination; the spread of education and consciousness-raising regarding human interdependence; and the evolution of new mechanisms of international cooperation. Similarly, one discerns emerging processes of decision-making that are increasingly inclusive, unifying and just, and that challenge partisanship as a means of addressing problems facing increasingly interdependent communities.

3. In this context, the Bahá'í International Community would like to offer its experience with a process of collective inquiry called consultation, which serves as the basis for deliberation and decision-making in Bahá'í communities around the world. Consultation is an approach to collective inquiry that is unifying rather than divisive. Participants are encouraged to express themselves freely as they engage in discussion, yet take care to do so in a dignified and courteous manner. Detachment from one's positions and opinions regarding the matter under discussion is imperative — once an idea has been shared, it is no longer associated with the individual who expressed it, but becomes a resource for the group to adopt, modify or discard. As consultation unfolds, participants strive to identify and apply moral principles relevant to the matter at hand. These may include the equality of men and women, stewardship of the natural environment, the elimination of prejudice and the abolishment of the extremes of wealth and poverty. This approach, unlike those of partisan confrontation or debate, seeks to shift the deliberation towards a new centre, manoeuvring away from competing claims and interests to the arena of principle, where collective goals and courses of action are more likely to surface and prevail.

4. Great value is placed on the diversity of perspectives and contributions that individuals bring to the discussion. Diversity is harnessed to enrich collective inquiry and deliberation. Actively soliciting views from those traditionally excluded from decision-making not only increases the pool of intellectual resources but also fosters the trust, inclusion and mutual commitment needed for collective action. For example, the valuing of diversity and the encouragement of minorities shapes the practice of electing local governing councils (called local spiritual assemblies), within Bahá'í communities: in the case of a tied vote, the position is awarded to the minority candidate.

5. On its own, however, a diversity of perspectives does not provide communities with a means to bridge differences or to resolve social tensions. In consultation, the value of diversity is inextricably linked to the goal of unity. This is not an idealized unity, but one that acknowledges differences and strives to transcend them through a process of principled deliberation. It is unity in diversity. While participants have different views or understandings of the issues at hand, they exchange and explore these differences in a unifying manner within the framework of consultation and from a commitment to the process and principles that guide it. In environments where sects, political factions, conflicting groups and entrenched discrimination weaken communities and leave them exposed to exploitation and oppression, unity, based in justice, is a quality of human interaction to be fostered and defended. The principle of "unity in diversity" also applies to the manner in which the decisions of the consulting body are carried out: all participants are called on to support the decision arrived at by the group regardless of the opinions they expressed in the discussion. If the decision proves incorrect, all participants will learn from its shortcomings and revise the decision as needed.

6. The principles and objectives of the consultative process rest on the understanding that human beings are essentially noble, that they possess reason and conscience as well as capacities for inquiry, understanding, compassion and service to the common good. In the absence of this perspective, labels such as "marginalized", "poor", or "vulnerable", with their emphasis on needs and deficiencies, often obscure these human qualities and capacities. To be sure, needs and underlying injustices must be addressed by the consultative process but individuals, as participants in the consultation, must strive to see each other in light of their inherent nobility and potential. They must each be accorded the freedom to exercise the faculties of reason and conscience; to set forth their views; to seek out truth and meaning for themselves; and to see the world through their own eyes. For the many who have not experienced these freedoms, consultation helps to initiate a process by which they gradually become protagonists of their own development and full participants in a world civilization.

7. The experience of the worldwide Bahá'í community, residing in 188 countries and 45 territories, suggests that the consultative process has universal application and does not favour any one culture, class, race or gender. Bahá'ís strive to apply the principles of consultation within their families, communities, organizations, businesses and elected bodies. As this practice is refined, it allows participants to attain greater levels of insight and understanding about the matters under consideration; to foster more constructive modes of expression; to channel diverse talents and perspectives towards common goals; to build solidarity of thought and action; and to uphold justice at every stage of the process. In order to develop and apply these integrative processes worldwide and to enable them to truly yield their

fruit, they will need to be coupled with efforts to provide universal education, to reform modes of governance, to eliminate prejudice and the extremes of wealth and poverty and to promote an international auxiliary language to facilitate communication among all peoples and nations. Such efforts will give rise to forms of social integration that are unifying and just and through which all peoples can strive together to build a new social order.

8. We conclude by inviting you to join in a collaborative process of inquiry by considering the following questions. Concerning consultation: What assumptions about human nature and social organization underlie adversarial patterns of deliberation and decision-making (for example debate, propaganda, partisanship, etc.)? What views of human nature give rise to mutualistic, reciprocal and cooperative patterns of deliberation and decision-making? How can we foster deliberative processes that encourage freedom of expression and build unity among participants? What social structures need to be in place to support more inclusive processes of deliberation and decision-making? What is the role of leadership and authority in unifying processes of deliberation and decision-making? What are other examples of integrative processes of decision-making? Concerning social integration: How can social tensions be resolved in a unifying framework? How do we ensure that raising consciousness and addressing the conditions of injustice that affect a particular group does not reinforce divisive distinctions? How do we ensure that emphasizing the value of unity does not reinforce passive habits of acceptance and resignation but rather strengthens the will to champion justice?

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement submitted by the Dominican Leadership Conference and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62383 (E) 231209

Please recycle

Statement

People on the move: a need to include them where they are

1. There are an estimated 200 million external migrants, 16 million refugees and asylum-seekers and 26 million internally displaced persons who constitute some of the groups that have moved for work or for reasons of safety, or as a result of poverty, conflict or climate change. There is virtually no country that is unaffected by human migration. Leaving a marginal existence in countries of origin, migrants move to improve their lives by integrating themselves into a new society in the countries of destination, which most often benefit from migrants' contributions. Migrants are often disappointed when they are marginalized yet again.

2. Migration can be a rich source of cultural sharing, a source of development for the countries of origin (owing to remittances) and a rich source of labour and cultural exchange for receiving countries whose populations are ageing. When efforts are made to integrate migrants into the communities in which they live and work, everyone benefits.

3. However, where external migrants are criminalized by legislation which does not conform to the current reality of labour needs, there results increasing xenophobia. Xenophobia leads host country communities to alienate newcomers. Increased numbers of migrants moving internally puts pressure on urban areas. As it is difficult to absorb large numbers of people in already well-populated city centres, these newcomers also experience alienation and discrimination.

4. Cross-cutting issues such as gender, organized crime, climate change and the financial, food and fuel crises make it clear that migration can no longer be ignored. To do so would place societies in great peril and would constitute an egregious violation of human rights. Indeed, both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly articles 13, 14 and 15, as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, place migration within the context of human rights. When migrants' rights are honoured, they are free to contribute to the communities of which they are a part.

Systemic causes of migration

5. A decision to migrate almost always implies the inability of a society or Government to provide for its people; migration is often not a freely made decision at all. Migration occurs where people feel forced to flee from something — armed conflict, genocide or crimes against humanity/human rights violations — or as a result of the inability to feed one's family owing to rising food prices, food shortages or climate-change-induced agricultural disasters or the inability to provide for the health and well-being of one's family. In short, society/government has failed in its responsibility to provide an enabling and inclusive environment for significant numbers of its members.

6. Poverty is the leading cause of migration worldwide. With the global financial crisis causing many to fall back into ever deeper poverty, worldwide migration patterns are expected to expand.

7. Many other factors result in people leaving their homes. Environmental refugees flee from disasters caused by climate change. Some migrants are recruited to fill jobs in other countries, either because the jobs are unwanted by host country

workers or because the host country's demographics (for example, ageing population, low fertility rates) require an influx of workers.

8. In all cases, whether they move within their own borders or internationally, migrants are frequently met with extreme forms of social exclusion and marginalization. Large groups of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (education, housing, employment, health care and democratic participation) that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration.

Social inclusion

9. Dignity and justice for each and every human being is the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Wherever people live and in whatever sort of society, one of their basic rights is to be allowed to take part in full in the life of their community. While the reality of migration makes this extremely challenging, it is nonetheless important and possible. Participation means that the voices of migrants who are so often excluded need to be heard and heeded, not silenced by "borders".

10. The planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies by all segments of society, including migrants, are essential to any integral process of social inclusion. To be deprived of this level of participation is, literally, to become "nameless" and lost to society. As a consequence, the society is deprived of the rich contributions new groups of people have to offer to its own ongoing development.

11. It is therefore incumbent on the host country to address barriers such as cultural distinctions, racism, the need for language acquisition and other educational issues, so that new migrants cannot only be aware of and assert their human rights, but also contribute to their new communities. It is clear that the protection of migrants' rights will enhance the development gains to be reaped from migration. To quote Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Respect for migrants' rights actually contributes to economic and social development in sending and receiving countries. Migrants who have opportunities for decent and legal work contribute more to development than those who are exploited".[1]

12. Two of the most essential elements in enabling people to lift themselves out of poverty and in advancing the overall development goals of any country, be it a sending or receiving country, are decent work and basic education. Serious investment in these would both reduce the conditions which force people to migrate and enhance their contributions to whatever society they find themselves in.

13. Individuals and non-governmental organizations often reach out to assist migrants with their many needs. A practical way to foster their greater inclusion in the host communities would be to sponsor inter-agency meetings, perhaps on a quarterly basis. These would offer an opportunity for all organizations serving the residents in a particular area to come together to share information; to plan community gatherings for the well-being of the entire community — newcomers, as well as long-standing residents; and to analyse community needs with the residents,

[1] See *International Migration and Human Rights*, Global Migration Group, October 2008, p. 80, available at www.globalmigrationgroup.org.

thereby fostering a sense of participation and working together for the common good.

Recommendations for Governments

- Since poverty is one of the leading causes of migration, Governments need to address systemic causes of migration by eliminating discriminatory trade and economic policies, agricultural subsidies and onerous debt conditionalities. These are counterproductive to poverty reduction and sustainable development and undermine economic stability, thus exacerbating outward migration. Honouring official development assistance commitments is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This would alleviate the need to migrate.
- To fulfil their responsibility to ensure that migrants' rights are protected, Governments should enforce the monitoring of procedures and practices of departments responsible for immigration and law enforcement and social welfare agencies, against the benchmarks of human rights law, international conventions and national laws. Continuing the task of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the issue of documentation for work would reduce the criminalization of migrants and the increasing tendency to xenophobia.
- In order to promote the decent work agenda, Governments also need to provide for the supervision of fair working and living conditions and working hours for migrants and endure the provision of safety devices, including compensation for injuries and the payment of just wages. This will free migrants to actively participate in community decision-making for the common good of all.
- Governments need to ensure the necessary budget allocations to assist education departments and non-governmental organizations in creating or enhancing already existing programmes for the following:
  - In-school acquisition of the host country language for migrant children
  - Adult education language acquisition programmes for men and women for social interchange, as well as for the workplace
  - Intercultural programmes which foster the mutual appreciation by both the newcomers and local residents of the richness of one another's traditions and customs.

Note: Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Franciscans International, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Partnership for Global Justice, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Sisters of Charity Federation, UNANIMA International.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/7

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement submitted by the International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62423 (E) 071209

Please recycle

1. The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is a global network of organizations and individuals that work to improve the quality of life for older persons through advocacy for policy change. Through its biennial conferences, IFA provides international forums for information exchange and develops innovative partnerships on age-related issues. IFA participated in both the First and Second World Assemblies on Ageing and has been actively following progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

2. IFA regards the topic of social integration/social inclusion to be a fundamental basis for social development, and we commend the Commission for its focus on this issue. Social inclusion should be the right of every person of any age. Regrettably, older persons, despite their increasing numbers worldwide, continue to be marginalized in both developed and developing countries. Age discrimination and neglect can be documented in virtually every country. It is abundantly clear that social inclusion can become a reality for older persons only when their rights are recognized and acted upon.

3. What are these rights? Simply put, they include the same rights that are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to equality before the law; the right to own and inherit property; the right to have adequate income support; the right to work; the right to have access to health care; and, importantly, the right to have freedom from violence and abuse.

4. One may ask why the need to address the rights of older persons specifically. The answer lies in the fact that as a group, older people remain invisible in the human rights discourse. Their rights are frequently overlooked in the development of legislation and policy as is the resulting impact of such actions. Age discrimination has not been seen as unacceptable nor equated to other aspects of discrimination such as racism or sexism. Indeed, it is rarely addressed.

5. Given this situation, IFA is pleased that steps on the part of Member States and the United Nations, as well as non-governmental organizations have been taken to begin to move towards formalizing the rights of older persons. These actions include the Third Committee's adoption last October of a resolution (A/C.3/64/L.6) requesting Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a "comprehensive report on the current status of the social situation, well-being, development and rights of older persons at the national and regional levels". The newly established Advisory Committee to the Human Rights Council has made the rights of older persons a priority issue and will present its recommendations on the issue in 2010. In October 2008, the General Assembly adopted a resolution instructing the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to prepare a study of older persons' rights, while in late 2007 the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean urged the United Nations to adopt a human rights convention and to appoint a special rapporteur on ageing. Also during the past two years at the regional level, Latin American Governments, notably those of Argentina, Brazil and Chile have been actively working towards developing a regional convention on the rights of older persons. Also a new protocol on these rights is under preparation, for inclusion in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

6. Moreover, IFA supports the view of the Expert Group Meeting, held in Helsinki in July 2008, which recommended an additional Millennium Development Goal exclusively related to social inclusion that provides a detailed breakdown of

goals, targets and indicators to capture the vulnerability of certain groups. We see the growing older population as a significant one of these groups.

7. In the same spirit that older persons strive for their rights, they are just as concerned for those of the young people in their lives. The multigenerational make-up of families and communities must work together for a common goal: a decent quality of life for all. Multigenerational relationships are key elements in addressing the rights of older persons. We are interdependent in our lives, regardless of place or time. Towards this end, such relationships must be strengthened as life issues such as poverty, health and education are given attention in each country and culture.

8. With increasing numbers of older persons worldwide and recognizing the need to ensure their full inclusion in society, it is time to take the steps necessary to establish their rights as a universal reality. IFA recognizes that effective implementation of new policies to address this goal is a major challenge. Nonetheless, it is a challenge that the United Nations, national Governments and civil society have an opportunity to join together in meeting. We stand ready to join in partnership with Governments to achieve an inclusive society that integrates both young and old — a true Society for All Ages.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/8

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Submitted by: Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62447 (E) 311209

Please recycle

Statement

Responding to climate change: striving for inclusive societies in a divided world

1. In 2008, at the Helsinki expert group meeting, social integration was generally accepted by the participants as "the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity".[1] Based on this view, approaches to achieving social inclusion have taken into account social, cultural, economic and political factors to determine what facilitates and what obstructs movement towards a socially inclusive and cohesive society. Generally unrecognized and unnamed in these approaches, however, are environmental factors, specifically the degradation brought on by human-induced climate change, which provides the background for the unfolding global financial and economic crisis[2] and which is now a recognized threat to human security and the sustainability of the Earth community.

Climate change and social development

2. Climate change is considered the defining human development issue of our generation, a cross-cutting issue with the potential to obstruct efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals.[3] For example:

Millennium Development Goal 1 aims to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; however, climate change is:

- Expected to change the path and rate of economic growth, thus increasing poverty through reduced income opportunities;
- Projected to alter regional food security, especially in Africa, where food security is expected to worsen.

Millennium Development Goal 2 aims to achieve universal primary education; however, owing to climate change,

- Loss of livelihood assets, natural disasters and displacement reduce educational opportunities.

Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 are health-related, aiming to combat major diseases, reduce infant mortality and improve maternal health; however, climate change increases:

- Heat-related mortality and illness;

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[1] Draft summary of the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, held in Helsinki from 8 to 10 July 2008, available from www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/meetings/egm6_social_integration.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 6* (E/2009/26), annex I (Chairperson's summary of the forty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development).

[3] See United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (United Nations Development Programme, 2007).

- The prevalence of vector-borne diseases which especially affect pregnant women and children.[4]

3. By hampering efforts to deliver on the promise of the Millennium Development Goals, climate change undermines attempts to eradicate poverty. It leads to a future in which progress in social development, i.e., in health care, nutrition, education and other areas, built up over generations will be reversed and the poorest 40 per cent of the world's citizens consigned to even greater poverty and diminished opportunity.[3]

Climate change and human rights

4. On 28 March 2008 the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted, by consensus, resolution 7/23 on human rights and climate change, which was co-sponsored by 69 countries. In the resolution, the Council expressed its concern that climate change posed an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and had implications for the full enjoyment of human rights. Indeed, climate change is set to undermine basic human rights on a massive scale, with the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups particularly at risk.[5] For example, the following rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be undermined:

- Right to life: survival, security and health (article 3);
- Right to sources of livelihood: food, water, energy, shelter and economic security (article 25);
- Right to participation: decision-making opportunities and information (articles 21 and 27);
- Right to capacity development: education and income generation opportunities (articles 23 and 26)

Thus, climate change is in direct opposition to social integration policies that promote and protect human rights.[2]

Climate change and social cohesion

> "Social integration is a process that strengthens the cohesion of societies .... Cohesion increases security in its comprehensive meaning."[2]

5. While social integration promotes a cohesive society through the inclusion of all, civil conflict interferes with this process, creating conditions that lead to social destabilization.

6. It is recognized that climate change is not the sole cause of violent conflicts, which may be the result of a variety of socio-economic factors, but it does serve as a trigger in the face of scarce resources, such as water or arable land. It may also

[4] African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and others, "Poverty and climate change: reducing the vulnerability of the poor through adaptation", joint paper, available from www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/27/2502872.pdf.

[5] "Climate wrongs and human rights: putting people at the heart of climate-change policy", OXFAM briefing paper, 2008, available from www.oxfam.org/en/policy/bp117-climate-wrongs-and-human-rights.

ignite conflict where resource competition between local and resettled populations, in the case of climate-induced migration, worsens pre-existing ethnic or social tensions.[6]

7. Besides destabilizing social institutions, civil conflict further degrades Earth's life support systems, thus exacerbating the consequences of climate change and adding to the threats to human security brought on by violent conflict. For example, groundwater supplies upon which 1.5 million Palestinians depend for drinking and agriculture are in danger of imminent collapse as a result of protracted conflict in the area.[7]

8. While there is no consensus that climate change drives violent conflict, it is now identified by States as a security concern because of its direct impact on local institutions in areas challenged by environmental degradation.[6]

9. It should also be recognized as central to policymaking and policy implementation for socially inclusive and cohesive societies.

Climate change and social inclusion

10. By undermining attempts to eradicate poverty, violating human rights and destabilizing societies through civil conflict, climate change is a threat to human security.

11. It renders people living in poverty even more vulnerable to social, economic and environmental stresses in their societies and less resilient, i.e., less capable of dealing with these stresses and of rising out of the conditions of poverty in which they live.

12. In this way, climate change and its multiple manifestations exacerbate social inequalities, contributing to the maintenance of social exclusion and serving as an obstacle to the achievement of socially inclusive and cohesive societies.

A moral imperative

13. There are two constituencies with no political voice that are especially threatened by climate change, which makes action to cope with it a moral imperative:

Persons who are living in poverty

This marginalized and excluded group, 70 per cent of whom are women, are on the front lines of climate change, whether in the Sudan, Bangladesh, the United States of America (e.g., New Orleans) or Australia. They bear the brunt of its manifestations, for which they are not mainly responsible.

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[6] Jennifer Wallace, "The security dimensions of climate change", in *State of the World: Into a Warming World*, Worldwatch Institute, ed. (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

[7] Message of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the 2009 International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (6 November), available from www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sgsm12578.doc.htm.

Future generations

While people living in poverty suffer the consequences of climate change today, in the future no one will escape. Our grandchildren, their children and grandchildren, indeed members of all social groups, will have no alternative but to try to adapt to them.

Taking climate change into account in efforts to promote an inclusive and cohesive society therefore is not simply a matter of adopting a more comprehensive approach in the hope of better outcomes to achieving social inclusion, however laudable the goal. It is a matter of social justice and intergenerational equity.

Recommendations

New thinking

> "Climate change is different from other problems facing humanity — and it challenges us to think differently at many levels."[3]

14. Given the impending threat to human security and the sustainability of our Earth community presented by climate change, if we are to move forward in developing and implementing policy for achieving an inclusive and cohesive society, it is necessary, first of all, to recognize the long-term predicament that climate change presents and then to move beyond a way of thinking limited to socio-economic factors to one that is holistic and integrated. Such integrated thinking would recognize that:

- We are a part of a socially and ecologically interdependent community;
- There is an interplay between the social and ecological dimensions, e.g., poverty and climate change; one leads to the other in a cyclical fashion;
- Climate change has social, economic and environmental impacts, all of which must be addressed in policymaking for social inclusion;
- Efforts to respond to these impacts, i.e., socially sustainable development and poverty eradication, are mutually supportive goals.

Resilient social development

15. The reduction of poverty and the eradication of core poverty are central to achieving social integration. Given that the climate crisis is a backdrop to such efforts and the fact that it will increasingly affect the poor, efforts must be made to help people living in poverty adapt to its consequences, i.e., to be less vulnerable and more resilient.

Recommendation 1

Integrated thinking, as outlined above, should be an overarching principle guiding policy development and implementation by all Governments.

Recommendation 2

Governments should incorporate adaptation to climate change, especially as this applies to education, health services and job creation, into strategies for poverty reduction and eradication. These strategies must aim to reduce the vulnerability of

people living in poverty to current and future risks and to increase the resilience with which people living in poverty respond to those risks.

Recommendation 3

Governments should build into policy development and implementation an environmental assessment of the policy's impact on current and future generations to ensure resilient and sustainable social development of their peoples.

Note: The present statement was written by members of the non-governmental organization Committee for Social Development's working group on poverty and climate change, the International Peace Research Association, the Sisters of Charity Federation and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The present statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

Baha'i International Community
Carmelite NGO
Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants
Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
Congregation of Notre Dame
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
Congregations of St. Joseph
Dominican Leadership Conference
Grail
International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Loretto Community
Salesian Missions
School Sisters of Notre Dame
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries
UNANIMA International
VIVAT International

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Submitted by HelpAge International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62497 (E) 120110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Universal non-contributory pensions are the foremost social protection mechanism to promote the social integration of older people and achieve the social protection objectives laid out in international policy frameworks.

2. Recalling the commitment of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for establishing a "social protection floor",[1] and by the International Labour Organization (ILO) for a social security floor,[2] HelpAge International calls for universal progressive realization of income security to protect poor and vulnerable groups.

3. At the meeting of experts on promoting social integration, the Commission for Social Development stated that social protection was one of the central measures to prevent disintegration and promote inclusion and integration. It had both defensive and developmental functions, providing much-needed basic income or access to services and breaking away from the intergenerational cycle of poverty over the long run. The present statement advances the case that a universal categorical approach (based on age) to achieving income security for older people is more likely to facilitate social integration than other social protection mechanisms that target the poorest.

4. The Madrid International Plan for Action on Ageing, 2002 recommends the provision of a sufficient minimum income for all older people, with particular attention to socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Due to challenges of affordability, a common response is to create targeted programmes aimed at these groups. However, many of the poorest older people are excluded due to discrimination resulting from the targeting methodology and implementation. A universal categorical approach is easier to administer and, as presented below, is not accompanied by the same risks of exclusion. With this in mind, there should be more effort at the national level to address the issue of affordability and to pursue inclusive social protection for older people.

Older men and women play an important role in social cohesion

5. There is often an assumption within development efforts that subsequent social and economic gains will be transferred, or can be sustained, into old age. However, old age is impoverishing and is associated with a catalogue of vulnerabilities that erode channels to social integration. These include, but are not limited to: a diminishing social network; declining health; and reducing access to resources. Despite this, older men and women, when they have access to sufficient means and support, are vital agents of social cohesion. They ensure the welfare of household members in their care and work within families and communities to achieve collective goals.

6. Social protection is essential to supporting people in these roles in old age and mitigating the impact of vulnerabilities. With reduced capacity to earn an income, a

[1] On 5 April 2009, the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), at a meeting in Paris, called for the establishment of the social protection floor, which intends to ensure services, empowerment and protection of the poor and vulnerable through services and transfers (cash or in kind).

[2] ILO is promoting the transfer component of social protection floor.

pension is a critical mechanism to maintain access to markets and services for older people and their households. Despite this, worldwide only one in five older people receives regular and reliable income in the form of a pension.[3]

Universal non-contributory pensions

7. HelpAge International identifies universal non-contributory pensions as the foremost social protection mechanism to ensure poor and vulnerable people receive a minimum income in old age. A universal approach is necessary as international evidence shows that poorer and more vulnerable people often fail to access means-tested or targeted pensions, even when they are designed to target them. Universality is inclusive — the whole population stands to benefit from the regular and reliable cash when they reach old age. The predictable nature of a minimum income in old age effectively mitigates deprivation for both older people and those with whom they share a caring relationship.

Vulnerability and poverty

8. Universality accounts for the dynamic nature of poverty. Through the simplicity of a universal pension's targeting criteria of age and citizenship, it addresses the vulnerabilities that determine risk of poverty as well as the basic needs of those in chronic poverty. The pension provides a vital life line for those in chronic poverty while for others it can curb vulnerabilities, enhance decision-making and springboard them out of poverty, for example by providing opportunities to invest in livelihood options.

Addressing gender inequality

9. Universal pensions are gender neutral since men and women are entitled to them equally. However, it can be argued that a universal non-contributory pension particularly benefits older women in terms of social integration. Women will, on average, live longer in old age, are more likely to experience the consequences of the loss of family support and have fewer options for income generation in old age than men — factors that can serve to exclude them in old age.

Enhancing social cohesion

10. Realization of rights is central to achieving social integration and social cohesion. The right to social security and security in old age are enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in subsequent international human rights instruments.

11. The legal entitlement to a universal non-contributory pension, irrespective of social difference (such as wealth, social capital), restores a sense of belonging to society that the Commission for Social Development has identified as pivotal to social cohesion.[4] Unlike contributory schemes, either formal or informal, a universal non-contributory entitlement to a pension facilitates the transformation of value judgments. Negative societal attitudes towards old age change and older

[3] Forteza, A. et al, "Measuring the Coverage Gap", in Holtzmann et al. (eds.), *Closing the Coverage Gap*, World Bank, 2009.

[4] Report of the expert group meeting on promoting social integration, 8-10 July 2008, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

people's economic and social capabilities are acknowledged and supported. The universal pension in Mauritius has been linked to enhanced levels of care of older family members as key contributors to the household's subsistence.

Reducing social exclusion

12. In order to avoid social exclusion, the collection of entitlements should not stigmatize recipients. Universal non-contributory pensions avoid stigmatizing people — something that can occur when an individual's level of poverty is an eligibility criteria for collecting benefits. In addition to stigma, targeted schemes can exacerbate tensions at the community level through creating a "leap frog" effect whereby recipients of the transfer become better off than non-recipients. This can be particularly divisive in communities where poverty levels are high and it is therefore difficult to identify who is the poorest. With a universal approach, difference and diversity remain intact without creating opportunity for these to be points of conflict.

Redistribution and social integration

13. The process of social integration requires the eradication of privilege. A universal pension funded by general taxation goes some way to meet this challenge by having most impact on the poorest older people's well-being while not punishing the most privileged. Although universal benefits would be received by a minority of wealthy older people, they are redistributive since they are disproportionately funded from the tax contributions of richer deciles of a population and have the greatest value in the poorest.

Intergenerational impact

14. A universal non-contributory pension not only concerns older people, but all citizens. It widely reported that cash in the hands of older people has an intergenerational impact. For example, grandparents, especially grandmothers, use their pension to meet the costs of schooling and improve the nutrition of their grandchildren.[5] This has significant implications for the social integration of children in households with older people. It can be argued that children in skipped-generation households[6] are at greater risk of social exclusion as they are required to supplement household labour, which results in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Particularly where there are large numbers of vulnerable children in the care of older people, there are strong implications for how a universal non-contributory pension can facilitate their integration. With this in mind, a universal pension can be seen as a good first step to achieving a social protection floor, which, in time, should include other universal categorical transfers, including a child grant.

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[5] See Duflo, E., 2003, "Grandmothers and Grand Daughters: Old Age Pensions and Intrahousehold Allocation in South Africa", and Devereux, S., 2001, "Social Pensions in Namibia and South Africa", Institute of Development Studies, discussion paper 379, and HelpAge International, 2009, "Salt, soap and shoes for school: the impact of pensions on the lives of older people and grandchildren in the KwaWazee project in the Kagera region of the United Republic of Tanzania" (www.helpage.org).

[6] Households which are composed of older people and children, for example where the parents have migrated for work or died as a result of AIDS.

Recommendations:

1. **Governments should fully explore the feasibility of a universal non-contributory pension for older people as the first option to realizing income security for poor older people and for achieving the social protection and social security floors.**

2. **Governments should investigate fiscal space and long-term financing options for universal non-contributory schemes.**

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the International Committee for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation, a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62515 (E) 080110

Please recycle

Statement

1. The International Committee for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation is a human rights organization dedicated to peace with justice. Although our primary goal is to attain a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict our vision is broader. That vision inspired us to participate in the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development. We enthusiastically extend our friendship and cooperation to other members of civil society and non-governmental organizations that have dedicated their services to the cause of social justice and equality. We view a society as a collection of individuals united by a common goal, which can be compared to a long linked chain. Like a chain, a society is only as strong as its weakest link. The strength or weakness, productivity or unproductivity, peaceful or hostile nature of a given society largely depends on its individual members. The family is a building block of a society. An individual is born into a family and then moves into society. Thus an individual is the connecting link between the family and society. Because of certain common beliefs, interests and culture, families form groups within society. If these groups of people do not communicate or interact with other groups in the society, each will remain isolated and over the time a wall of fear and suspicion will build surrounding each isolated group, thus paving the way of domination of one group over the other, generating a hierarchy of domination. Over the course of human history domination of one group over the other has been observed again and again. Therefore, to make the society a better place to live in, individual components or groups must move from isolation to integration. The concept of social integration, which according to the expert group meeting on creating an inclusive society, represents the attempt not to make people adjust to society but rather to ensure that society is accepting of all people. It is a common observation that if a group of people in a society is kept in isolation and pushed below the benchmark of social justice, it will limit the advance of the rest of society and eventually bring such advancement to a halt. Therefore, integration and not isolation is beneficial to all in the society.

2. To attain social integration we propose the following:

(a) Acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are empowered with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood";

(b) Members belonging to different groups or components of a society should be encouraged to communicate with one another, join each other's social functions and discuss matters of mutual interest from a common platform. This will promote friendship and understanding among the members of different groups in a society and will also help remove the wall of fear and suspicion that may exist between groups in a society and thus pave the way for social integration;

(c) One way to enhance social integration is to make all members of society take part in projects of common social interest. Illiteracy, disease, polluted air or a filthy environment are detrimental to all members of the society. So a common fight against a common enemy will enhance social interaction and promote social integration;

(d) The basic mechanism driving social change is the increasing awareness leading to better organization. Just as the life of an individual can evolve, so can the

condition of society evolve and progress. Social integration is enhanced when each member of society gets the equal benefit of technological development;

(e) Social integration requires the recognition that each human entity not only has physical but also spiritual needs. Integration will not be possible if individuals are prevented from pursuing their spiritual needs. If an individual member is happy and free, society as a whole will be happy and free. At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development it was rightly noted that, societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, and that intolerance and religious hatred pose severe threats to human security and well-being;

(f) Proper practice and interpretation of religions can play a very important role in uniting peoples. If individuals belonging to different religions freely intermingle, they will understand each other better. Different religions can be viewed as different paths leading to the same destination. This kind of religious interpretation will not only bring social integration but will also result in peace and harmony among different communities, resulting in a better world in which to live.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the Salesian Missions, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62521 (E) 080110

Please recycle

Statement

Legal empowerment of the poor: a bridge to social integration

1. More than 4 billion people do not have access to even the most basic legal protections. This finding of the Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (2008)[1] has wide ranging and serious implications for individuals and societies. It indicates that many citizens, especially women and children, who are often the most vulnerable and impoverished, are denied their most fundamental rights. As we address social integration at this session of the Commission for Social Development and recall the commitments of the world leaders to social inclusion in the Copenhagen Declaration (1994), the reality of social exclusion casts its shadow over the discussions. Four billion people are denied the most basic building blocks of participation in civil society: identity documents, property rights, labour rights and legal status for small enterprises.

2. The legal empowerment of the poor is an acknowledgement that societies are complex and that all people are entitled to full protection under the law. It also acknowledges the wisdom and skills of all members of a community and their potential for creating just and equitable societies that are free from want and fear. By utilizing the energy and creativity of all their members, communities can create a better, more prosperous, equal and humane world.

3. As noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the legal empowerment of the poor and eradication of poverty (A/64/133), "Legal empowerment of the poor is both a development strategy and a development objective. While its priorities should be set by the poor and for the poor, they should also be guided by human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability".

4. Since national contexts differ so broadly, a single blueprint for accomplishing legal empowerment of the poor does not exist. However, certain key conditions and rules should guide implementation of legal empowerment. In the publication *Making the Law Work for Everyone*, the four key conditions for legal empowerment are given: identity, information, voice and organization; the five guiding rules are that the process should be bottom-up, affordable, realistic, liberating and risk aware.

Participation

5. The legal empowerment process must be based on the needs of those living in poverty as they themselves experience and express them. Reforms must be designed and implemented in an inclusive and participatory way, and geared towards helping those living in poverty to organize themselves.

6. Participation in a society is directly linked to trust in Governments and institutions that exercise authority in the society. Some of those living in poverty have come to believe, based on painful experiences, that the law is often used as a weapon against them. As a result, they seek to avoid any involvement with the legal system as it exists. The realities of corruption, repression and deep-seated prejudices act as barriers, preventing those living in poverty from seeking their rights through the legal system. Since poverty is also about a lack of power, those living in poverty

[1] Salesian Missions recommends the use of "those living in poverty" in place of "the poor".

can often feel powerless in a system they believe is not open to them or respectful of them. Educating those living in poverty about their rights and the protections of the law can do much to alleviate fear and increase access to legal systems.

7. The rule of law must be de jure and de facto available to everyone equally. Ease of access to justice, and safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society can strengthen trust between a government and its peoples. Justice encourages even greater participation in decision-making and community building.

8. The Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor also pointed out that societal norms and customs can present challenges to legal empowerment.

> "Many societies and cultures have hierarchical and patriarchal power structures that make carrying out legal empowerment difficult. Involving the poor in decision-making and giving women equal rights may be particularly challenging. In some contexts, custom may run contrary to a vision of human rights enshrined in a national constitution, particularly where it comes to the treatment of women and minorities. A similar dilemma arises when attempting to ensure minimum levels of accountability and transparency within customary structures. Fortunately, customs are not rigid and unchanging. It is thus possible to aim at a process in which customary practices evolve in response to social development and human rights principles."

Good practices

9. The work of Patricia van Nispen tot Sevenaer in starting a microjustice initiative in Bolivia, with plans to expand into Peru and Colombia, serves as a model for good practice in legal empowerment, especially in helping establish legal identity. She noted that the World Bank has estimated that some 24 per cent of the Bolivian population, roughly 2.2 million people, lack identity documents, not including papers that have minor clerical errors that make them invalid and necessitate lengthy court cases. Without these documents, Bolivians are prohibited from going to school, opening savings accounts, utilizing public health services or receiving pensions. Lack of access because of lack of legal status is not limited to Bolivia. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has noted that more than 70 per cent of children in the least developed countries do not have birth certificates or similar registration documents.

10. In a similar manner, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has sponsored projects related to microjustice in 10 countries, thus addressing the legal needs of those living in poverty. Their initiatives in both Asia and Latin America establishing systems for legal empowerment of the poor are replicable.

11. Two other examples of civil society assisting those living in poverty — people pushed to the margins of society by lack of access to legal systems — are noteworthy: Stones of Hope, a collaboration among African human rights activists and human rights scholars to examine innovations in economic and social rights advocacy begun by Dr. Lucie White of Harvard Law School; and the work of the International Development Law Organization. Both organizations have facilitated access to the legal system and empowered those who live in poverty, especially in the area of the legal right to own property.

12. While non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations have often responded to the immediate needs of those living in poverty and served as facilitators in the ongoing dialogue about legal empowerment with Governments and multinational organizations, the role of multilateral agencies in this work is becoming more apparent and necessary. Legal empowerment of the poor must be a multipartnered endeavour, a movement that is a collaboration of all the stakeholders in society and in the world community. Globalization does not allow us to remain in isolation.

Recommendations

13. We therefore recommend:

(a) Adopting strong policies and mechanisms to guarantee that all births be registered. Registering children born at home through local government offices, registrations of birth at time of vaccination in local clinics and facilitating the correction of inaccurate birth registrations of youths and adults are some mechanisms that can be utilized to guarantee legal identity;

(b) Facilitating the process for securing land titles and guarding the right to own property. Safeguarding the ownership of properties held in common through cultural agreements, as well as the right of women to inherit and own land must also be a priority;

(c) Following the suggestion of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor to appoint "defenders of the poor" at the local and international levels. The international community should decide that such defenders fall under the concept of human rights defenders as articulated in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (see *Making the Law Work for Everyone*, 2008);

(d) Reaffirming commitment No. 4 of the Copenhagen Declaration to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and strengthen the human rights framework ratifying international legal instruments that promote poverty alleviation and social inclusion.

Note: The present statement has been endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, the Congregation of St. Joseph, the Dominican Leadership Conference, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International and Vivat International.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/12

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Submitted by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, UNANIMA International and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62527 (E) 120110

Please recycle

Statement

Achieving social integration — meaningful work, social protection and social housing

1. The fourth commitment made at the World Summit for Social Development was to promote social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and the participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

2. Three profound social problems were identified: poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. It was noted in Copenhagen that these problems affected every country. The task identified was to address both their underlying and structural causes and their distressing consequences in order to reduce uncertainty and insecurity in the people's lives.

3. Experience shows that an awareness of these problems has been created and that some good practices have been established, although there are major public policy challenges facing society concerning the underlying structural causes and their distressing consequences. Our global interconnectedness has brought us to the point where the choices we make now will have a profound impact on the future of humanity.

4. The dominant economic model has failed. The model was premised on economic growth as an end in itself and in the service of the powerful. Inherent in this model was a belief in the trickle down effect and that "the rising tide would lift all boats". The economic crises as well as other major global challenges regarding food, water, energy and climate change are a wake-up call to articulate a shared vision, a socially inclusive global society based on the promotion and protection of all human rights. A new financial architecture with major redistribution of resources and power is required to achieve the vision of Copenhagen for an integrated society.

5. The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is an international non-governmental organization of 4,000 sisters working in 72 countries. We see that the people who benefited the least from the economic model are the very people who are suffering the most from its failure. As an organization working in particular with women and children, we see first-hand the gender aspect of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion where the dominant causes are discrimination and lack of enforced rights.

6. Our vision of the future is a society that is socially just. Such a society would be grounded in the values of human dignity and human rights, including responsibilities, as well as solidarity that leads to social integration and a just society for all. This requires that individuals, families, communities and nations look through the lens of social justice and undertake decision-making that will transform our world. The lens is one of right not might. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and its commitment to social integration demands that we prioritize human dignity, human rights, solidarity and social inclusion. What is required now is that Member States commit to these same values in action.

7. While our vision for the future may be desirable, one may ask if it is achievable. Our experience says, yes! We discuss here three areas of activity that foster a socially inclusive society and make it a reality: meaningful work, social protection and social housing.

Meaningful work

8. We prefer to use the term meaningful work rather than employment. We do so because all work is not necessarily meaningful and not all meaningful work is paid employment, for example, work in the home and voluntary work in the community. We also recognize while paid employment is very desirable, unemployment and lack of access to paid work is a reality for many.

9. We have established many skills-training and microfinancing projects for individuals and groups, especially women, who live in extreme poverty. Some projects have a local market focus, others look to international markets. This is where our international network is able to promote and market products through such organizations as Handcrafting Justice, Sharing Fair and the Good Shepherd Trading Circle.[1] Global inclusion is experienced through these relational networks between people in developing and developed countries. This is based on recognition of skills, respect for diversity and builds economic solidarity.

10. By supporting these initiatives, women have an experience of dignified work, adequate income to support their families and work in environments that are safe and people-centred. Through skills development and informal education these women become motivators for change within the family and the local community. They move from positions of exclusion to inclusion and become the bedrock of local communities that are safe, secure and just.

Social protection

11. In the context of meaningful work, we recognize that many people are unemployed and that others are engaged in unremunerated work. For these reasons we strongly support the idea of a basic or minimum income. Our organization supports the concept as a feasible alternative approach to creating a more just, inclusive and socially cohesive society. We note the discussion of this concept in the United Nations publication *World Economic and Social Survey 2008 — Overcoming Economic Insecurity*. A basic income system would create a platform for meaningful work. It would benefit paid employment, as well as other forms of work. There are many reasons to introduce basic income: (a) it ensures that everyone receives at least a minimum level of income; (b) it alleviates poverty and unemployment; (c) it ensures gender equality; (d) it gives value to unpaid work, such as home duties and caring; and (e) it faces up to the changes in the global economy. In sum, it is a powerful and effective force for social inclusion.[2]

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[1] See http://www.goodshepherdsisters.com/; http://www.handcraftingjustice.cedris.org/; http://www.goodshepherdsistersgb.org/; http://www.thetradingcircle.com.au/.

[2] *Socio-Economic Review 2007: Addressing Inequality. Policies to Ensure Economic Development, Social Equity and Sustainability* (Dublin, CORI Justice Commission, 2007).

Social housing

12. Having a safe home with security of tenure is an important aspect of social integration. The need for accommodation is deemed a basic human need.[3] There is a close connection between housing policy and other social policies, such as employment. One concrete example would be the practical difficulties in keeping a job while experiencing homelessness or sustaining accommodation while unemployed.[4] There is a clear link in addressing housing need with economic and social development.

13. If housing were to be regarded as providing a home, and not just as a market commodity, it would be clearly understood as a social good like education and public health.

14. In Ireland, for example, our organization provides sheltered housing projects for older people and emergency accommodation to homeless women and children. Believing in the dignity of each person, our organization strives to provide quality care tailored to meet the needs of individuals and families so that they can live in a safe and nurturing environment. Family support education and training is also provided. These projects are inserted in the local community providing those who benefit with an experience of social integration. We collaborate with other local organizations to advance the social housing agenda.[5]

Recommendations

15. We are at an extraordinary moment in history. Abandoning the vision of Copenhagen is not an option. To build a more just and socially cohesive society we recommend that Member States:

(a) Adopt and implement socio-economic and human rights-based policy measures and legal instruments that foster an inclusive society. Alongside rights are responsibilities: individuals have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and society has a duty to permit their full participation;

(b) Prioritize and provide social housing and maximize the benefits for people who are socially excluded by ensuring that social inclusion policies are synchronized across all government departments;

(c) Implement adult informal education sessions and skills training as these foster social inclusion, build attitudes of tolerance and non-discrimination and provide equality of opportunity and outcome;

(d) Establish basic social protection schemes for both formal and informal economies which serve to ensure greater equality, inclusion, stability and cohesion in society.

[3] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 21, *The Human Right to Adequate Housing*, available at http://www.ohchr.org.

[4] See David Silke, "Housing Policy", in *Contemporary Irish Social Policy*, Suzanne Quin and others ed. (Dublin: UCD Press, 2005).

[5] http://www.corksocialhousingforum.com/.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2001/1.

09-62412 (E) 311209

Please recycle

Statement

1. The NGO Committee for Social Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, conducted an online consultation on *good practices for social integration* in preparation for the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development.

2. Participants from 190 civil society organizations from 64 countries contributed their success stories in creating an enabling environment for an inclusive society. The good practices embrace a wide range of populations: people living in poverty, women, children, youth, older people, indigenous peoples, migrants, ethnic minorities and people living with disabilities. In spite of today's many crises, civil society organizations have demonstrated that a "society for all" is indeed possible.

3. The exercise uncovered some essential characteristics of effective practices of social integration, including: benefit the whole society; community-based; engage beneficiaries; sustainability; and replicability. The surveys clearly indicate that social integration/inclusion is not a vague concept. It is a principle that non-governmental organizations are implementing on a daily basis.

4. The survey also identified barriers to social integration and policy recommendations that might enhance social integration.

5. The most frequently mentioned barriers were lack of education (74 responses), gender inequality, gender stereotyping, patriarchal attitudes or abusive cultural practices (55 responses); and poverty (52 responses). Other barriers identified by respondents included: lack of access to health care, housing and other social services (36); unemployment and underemployment (48); lack of investment in social infrastructure and poverty eradication strategies (38); discrimination against migrants (43); disparity of wealth (27); macroeconomic policies (15); stigma (11) and discrimination (28); lack of participatory governance processes, corruption and political instability (21); absence of human and spiritual values and morality (30); difficulties facing youth including extremism (11).

Recommendations

6. Responsible societies respect and care for the most vulnerable individuals and understand the importance of including everyone in the social fabric.

Education

7. Universal access to quality education provides long-lasting social dividends that contribute to social inclusion. However, those benefits will only be realized if Governments:

(a) Provide childcare and early childhood education in areas and communities of social disadvantage;

(b) Ensure meaningful participation by children and young people in the society;

(c) Reform education, where necessary, to reduce all forms of discrimination, stigma and to address cultural beliefs that maintain social exclusion;

(d) Educate the staff of statutory agencies in dealing with social and economic disadvantage;

(e) Train staff working with people with disabilities in special education theory and practice;

(f) Collaborate with the media in educating the wider community in protecting the human rights and gifts of people who are different, be they indigenous, migrants or the physically or mentally challenged.

Social protection

8. Surveys highlighted the necessity for policies that link social protection, social and human development and job creation and income generation. Social programmes need to be developed and delivered in a decentralized and participatory manner, place people at the centre and:

- Guarantee adequate minimum income
- Provide access to medical care and mental health services
- Develop housing and shelter that is affordable and socially mixed
- Ensure accessibility of services, facilities and information, particularly for persons with disabilities and migrant populations
- Develop policies that provide social protection, health care and education for all migrants, refugees, indigenous and internally displaced persons
- Abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that discriminate against persons, particularly women and those with disabilities
- Regularize and simplify procedures for registering births.

Decent work and employment

9. A significant number of respondents indicated that opportunities for decent work and income that enable a dignified life are key to promoting social inclusion. Participants recommended that Governments:

(a) Establish employment and job training programmes so that individuals are prepared to work in the twenty-first century workforce;

(b) Address poverty eradication by creating real employment rather than through short-term programmes that have no ongoing prospects;

(c) Support income generation through microcredit programmes and tax breaks for vulnerable populations;

(d) Provide financial support for business start-ups to people challenged by disabilities;

(e) Enact labour laws that protect workers and respect their dignity and rights; and provide international support to countries in the developing world to create employment and to prevent their citizens being forced to leave their native countries.

Macroeconomic policies

10. Respondents also called attention to the need for macroeconomic reform to support more sustained social integration and urge the international community to:

- Regulate tax systems for a more equitable distribution of public funds
- Reverse the unfortunate trend to cut programmes for those living in poverty from budgets in times of economic crisis
- Encourage local investment in developing countries to stop the flow of employable people from their own countries
- Develop legislation that prevents the exploitation of a country's natural resources at the expense of its citizens
- Promote integral land reform, especially for rural families, to guarantee them food sovereignty, health and decent housing and access to markets
- Penalize usury, exploitation of labour and human trafficking
- Establish ethical economic principles and laws that discourage speculation
- Encourage national Governments and private companies, especially the banks, to adopt socially responsible policies that focus on the common good.

Personal agency and local participation

11. Many surveys stressed the importance of individuals and communities being involved in the decisions that affect their lives and called on Governments to implement strategies that increase local participation. Respondents called for the international community to:

(a) Develop local and regional dialogues to discuss key issues and policies and ensure that representation is wide-ranging and inclusive,

(b) Recognize the importance of locally relevant and locally generated information and the participation of the relevant social actors from all sectors of society in decision-making;

(c) Ensure that government projects address the realities of the local communities and include systematic, participatory processes that can be evaluated.

Affirmative action

12. Social integration requires proactive policies. Respondents urged Governments to:

(a) Enact and enforce anti-discrimination laws and policies that promote the social and economic integration of marginalized groups, including women;

(b) Establish service delivery protocols for government agencies that give priority to social inclusion and the fostering of diversity;

(c) Set up training, adaptation and support structures and develop community awareness programmes in order to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in community life as equal citizens with real expectations, hopes and dreams;

(d) Demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and initiatives to reclaim cultures, languages and traditions and honour peoples' right to self-determination.

Immigration

13. Many surveys drew attention to the need for immigration reform as a significant means of promoting social integration. Migrants experience discrimination, abuse of their human rights and social exclusion. Governments in receiving countries should take action to:

(a) Develop policies that consider the religious and cultural practices of the migrants and monitor policy implementation so that basic human rights are respected and not abused;

(b) Disseminate information about laws, regulations and government services in various languages;

(c) Provide affordable and convenient language classes for all immigrants;

(d) Supervise working and living conditions, working hours and safety devices, including ensuring compensation for injuries, payment of just wages and protection of foreign workers;

(e) Protect foreign women and girls who are deceived into serving as exploited labour or participating in the sex trade;

(f) Foster intercultural relations in both sending and receiving countries.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/14

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Joint statement by AARP, HelpAge International and the International Federation on Ageing, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Global Action on Aging, the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, the International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Inc., non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62435 (E) 311209

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Statement

Strengthening the rights of older people worldwide

Introduction

1. Older people continue to experience discrimination and violation of their rights and are subsequently marginalized and excluded from society. Existing human rights mechanisms do not sufficiently protect older people's rights and the time has come to explore new mechanisms to better protect their rights.

Human rights, older people and social integration

2. The protection of human rights is central to social integration. Commitment 4 of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development committed Governments to "promote social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just, and are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights".[1]

3. The world population is ageing rapidly: by 2050 one in five people will be over the age of 60, with over three quarters in developing countries.[2] As the world experiences rapid population ageing, the pressures that result in age discrimination are likely to intensify; so does the imperative to address such discrimination.

4. Protecting older people's rights and treating them with respect on an equal basis along with younger people will help them to lead dignified, secure lives as equal members of society. Increased protection of the rights of older men and women creates the conditions which enable them to live more independently and to participate in and contribute to their own development, as well as that of those around them. In so doing, respecting and protecting all people's rights results in more inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies.

Discrimination against older people

5. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) states in article 1 that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". This equality does not change with age. However, many older women and men continue to experience discrimination, abuse and neglect, with little attention paid to protecting their rights.

6. Older men and women age differently and the discrimination that they experience is often multidimensional, based not only on age but on other factors, such as gender, ethnic origin, where they live, disability, poverty, sexuality and/or literacy levels. The combination of a lifetime of gender-based discrimination and age discrimination means that older women often face disproportionate abuse and discrimination. Older people in rural areas, older refugees, older asylum-seekers and stateless older people also experience disproportionate levels of discrimination.

7. Older men and women are often denied access to services and jobs or treated with disrespect because of their age and other factors such as gender or disability. Older men and women are often subjected to abuse, including verbal, sexual, psychological and financial abuse. Many older people do not have financial

[1] See http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm.

[2] *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006.

protection such as pensions and other forms of social security. Older people may not receive appropriate health and social care because of their age. Treatment can be denied or older people can receive poor or insufficient service.

8. Sometimes older people are deemed "unemployable" because of their age, which is a violation of a person's rights in the workplace — everyone has the right to income security. Furthermore, older people may also be forced to stop working because of mandatory retirement ages. In many parts of the world inheritance laws, both statutory and customary, deny women of all ages the right to own or inherit property when their husband is deceased. Family members often force widows off their land or seize their property, which is a violation of their right to equality in terms of ownership, management and disposition of property.

Existing protection of older people's rights is inadequate

9. Existing international and regional human rights law does not sufficiently protect older people's rights. International human rights conventions, which are legally binding, all emphasize that human rights are for everyone. However, with the exception of one convention (on migrant workers), age is not listed explicitly as a reason why someone should not be discriminated against.

10. In practice, the existing system does not adequately protect the rights of older men and women. For example, treaty bodies, whose role it is to monitor how international conventions are being implemented, rarely ask countries to include older people in their reporting. At a national level, the continued existence of age discrimination and ageism in national laws, policies and practice is also a sign that Governments have failed to adequately incorporate older people's rights into their laws, budgets, programmes and training for service delivery staff.

11. "Soft laws" guiding the treatment of older women and men, most notably the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991) and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, are not legally binding and as a result are not systematically integrated into government policies and practice.

The need for new mechanisms to protect older people's rights

12. In the face of continuing discrimination and insufficient legal protection, the time has come to explore new mechanisms to better protect older people's rights. These include a special rapporteur and a convention on the rights of older people.

13. A convention would help older people live lives of dignity. It would help change attitudes towards older people; increase the visibility of older people and highlight ageism and age discrimination; clarify responsibilities towards older people; improve accountability; and provide a framework for policy and decision-making. This is essential for achieving social integration and building societies for all that respect everyone's rights.

14. The human rights standards that protect older people's rights are scattered throughout various international and regional conventions. Bringing the relevant provisions together in one text, as was successfully done for the rights of women, children and people with disabilities, would bring clarity to both the nature of older people's rights and the responsibilities necessary to protect them.

15. A special rapporteur on the rights of older people could advise and support Member States on the better implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and, eventually, on the elaboration of a new convention. The rapporteur could promote and give visibility to the rights of older people by examining and reporting on the nature and extent of violations of older people's rights and making recommendations on how to better protect older people's rights, and would also be able to encourage existing rapporteurs to address older people's rights within their specific areas of concern.

Recommendation

16. We urge the Commission for Social Development to recommend that Member States explore the possibility of new mechanisms to better protect the rights of all older women and men, including a special rapporteur and a convention on the rights of older people.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement submitted by the Alulbayt Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

"The relevance of spirituality for the social integration of youths"

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

1. The priority theme of the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development is "social integration" and its provisional agenda includes a deliberation on the World Programme of Action for Youth. The Economic and Social Council has a stated aim to promote gender equality and foster social integration for social groups, such as youth, persons with disabilities, and older persons, as well as migrants and indigenous peoples. The Alulbayt Foundation's research department, the Centre for Islamic Shi'a Studies, hereby offers a working solution, based on spirituality to reduce problems of drugs and violence and to restore a sense of stable social integration in the lives of the young.

2. The organization was interested in the statement of the *World Youth Report 2005* that "many young people are exploring their sexuality, and for some this exploration has certain embedded risks. Some youth experiment with drugs or venture into some type of delinquency, mostly of a temporary duration. These transitional risks have not changed much through the generations, and they remain of primary concern to most young people today". It is the view of the Alulbayt

* E/CN.5/2010/1

09-62316 (E) 151209

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Foundation that these problems must first be seen in the light of the motivations and desires that had young people resort to such risks, which lead to social disintegration. This is a decidedly spiritual question.

Spirituality

3. By spirituality we do not merely mean a theological or worship-based spirituality. We advocate a wider definition of spirituality that is ethical, psychological and focused on understanding the "self" and one's "personhood". This is based on the philosophy of 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib (the first Shi'a Imam, son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad) who said: "He who truly knows himself has known his Lord".[1] Arguably, the idea behind this narration is to emphasize journeying within oneself to understand one's origin. Aside from the issue of belief, what is significant here is acquiring an inner sense of the worth of one's character. This is crucial to prevent the social disorders that lead to crime, moral apathy, depression and a lack of direction in life.

4. Zayn Al-'Ābidīn (the fourth Shi'a Imam and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) uniquely stated that even our organs have rights: "your hands and stomach have rights".[2] The deeper meaning behind this is to foster greater responsibility in human beings to be aware of actions they commit against themselves and each other.

5. In fact, the potential of spirituality has been elucidated by various scholars, including Puchalski, who states, "Spirituality can be defined as whomever or whatever gives one a transcendent meaning in life". This is often expressed through religion or as a relationship with God, but it can also refer to other things: nature, energy, force, belief in the good of all and belief in the importance of family and community.

6. The spirit is the essence of the person, what makes him or her unique.[3] Hay builds on such definitions and believes health-care staff can diagnose spiritual suffering in the following categories:

(a) "Spiritual suffering: interpersonal and/or intra-psychic anguish of unspecified origin;

(b) Inner resource deficiency: diminished spiritual capacity;

(c) Belief system problem: lack of awareness of one's personal system of meaning;

(d) Religious request: a specifically expressed religious request".[4]

7. In our research into United Nations policies and reports, we did not find much deliberation on how the self, that is, a person's identity, personality and self-consciousness, can contribute to social isolation and displacement within a society. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond identified

[1] ReyShahri, Muhammad Muhammadi, *Mizan al-Hikmah*, vol. 6, 142, No. 11923, reported from Ghurar al-Hikam.

[2] Chittick, W., *Al-Saheefa Al-Sajjadiyyah* (The Psalms of Islam), Ansariyan Publications.

[3] Puchalski, Christina M., Center to Improve Care of the Dying, George Washington University School of Medicine (October 1999).

[4] Hay, M. W., *Principles in building spiritual assessment tools*, American Journal of Hospice Care (1989), 6: 25-31.

10 priority areas to improve the situation and well-being of a youth: education; employment; hunger and poverty; health; environment; drug abuse; juvenile delinquency; leisure time activities; girls and young women; and full and effective participation of youths in the life of society and decision-making.[5] None of these areas, however, emphasized how youth feel within their employment or environment. Or what leads a young person to an impoverished state. Is it because he/she is internally unhappy? Is it because he/she has not found any inner contentment and direction in his/her life? For the Alulbayt Foundation, these are crucial questions which come before the 10 priority areas listed.

Conclusion

8. In conclusion, the Alulbayt Foundation's research department, the Centre for Islamic Shi'a Studies, proposes a practical application of spirituality in a young person's life by recommending that:

(a) Schools and community centres adopt classes that promote techniques of "self-reflection" and "personal awareness through discussion". Just as society has included sports as a fundamental lesson to promote fitness of the body, we believe society now needs to consider the fitness of the mind and heart;

(b) The Alulbayt Foundation is committed in supporting such endeavours and does so in its activities. We have set up a Saturday school for youths in our local area to improve their education and well-being. We have also supported the establishment of schools in Africa and the Middle East, in particular in Iraq, through our international branches. We request the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations departments to support such activities.

[5] General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex.

United Nations E/CN.5/2010/NGO/16

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 November 2009

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-eighth session
3-12 February 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Statement submitted by the International Council on Social Welfare, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

Impact of the global financial crisis on social integration

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

09-62377 (E) 281209

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Statement

1. The facts are no longer in dispute, nor can they be ignored. The current financial and economic crisis has become a social development crisis. The crisis is impeding the global community's ability to meet the internationally agreed development goals and in particular the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, of poverty eradication, full employment and social integration.

2. This, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, has converged with the food and fuel price fluctuations and looming climate change disasters to make it a triple threat to social development.

3. The traditional poor — those social groups that have long constituted the bottom strata of the income and occupational distribution — remain excluded. The global financial crisis has restricted even further their access to mainstream society, characterized by affordable access to quality social services such as basic education, health care, safe water and sanitation and housing.

4. There is an added tragedy. We are witnessing a rise in the number of new poor and excluded. The new poor have lost their jobs or income as a result of the current crisis. Those people had managed to climb above the poverty line, but have now tumbled back below and outside of mainstream society.

The numbers

5. The United Nations estimates that as many as 103 million more people will fall into poverty or fail to escape poverty because of the crisis, in effect excluding them from enjoying the benefits that development brings.

6. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recently revised upwards its unemployment projections to levels ranging from 210 million to 239 million unemployed worldwide, as a result of this crisis. The numbers in vulnerable employment are even more staggering. In East Asia alone, there were about 12 times as many people in vulnerable employment as in unemployment. In South Asia, approximately 5 per cent of the labour force is unemployed, while nearly 15 times as many workers are employed, but in vulnerable employment. The crisis is hitting young people hard. The number of unemployed young people is expected to increase from 11 million in 2008 to 17 million in 2009.

Those affected

7. In developing countries as a whole, those most affected by recent job and income losses include:

- "Flexible"/migrant/undocumented foreign workforce
- Contract workers or overtime-dependent workers
- Retrenched workers at the lower occupational rungs
- Agricultural sector workers and owners of small agricultural holdings
- Manufacturing sector workers, unemployed graduates, new entrants and under-skilled workers

- The self-employed, especially those severely affected by the ripple effects arising from the economic slowdown or recessionary conditions

Impact

8. The rise in unemployment and vulnerable employment is threatening to exclude many more millions from hard-won social achievements, particularly education. Poor families are being forced to remove their children — often girls — from school and require them to work in the informal sector to supplement family income.

9. Reports have indicated that families in Africa and Asia are being forced to sell their productive assets such as land, livestock and beasts of burden, making them even more vulnerable and destitute. Reduced household consumption is likely to increase malnutrition, especially among children. This hinders child growth, affecting learning and cognitive abilities. The World Bank has reported that infant deaths in developing countries may be 200,000 to 400,000 per year higher on average between 2009 and the Millennium Development Goal target year of 2015. Another report estimates that the current crisis will lead to between 30,000 and 50,000 excess infant deaths.

Response

10. What should be the immediate and longer-term response? The answer lies in the fact that in this crisis, as in the previous one, the poor and excluded are disproportionately affected because they have weak coping mechanisms.

11. National responses, including subsidies that protect vital consumption items such as food and cooking fuel, are useful, immediate anti-crisis measures. Existing social assistance programmes such as labour-intensive public works and cash transfers can protect jobs and incomes in the short term. Social and infrastructure spending and other stimulus packages have proved useful in the short term.

12. But the soaring fuel and food prices of 2008 and the subsequent global financial crisis are unlikely to be unique. Pressures on natural resources, heightened by climate change effects and the ending of stimulus packages, will push commodity prices up when the global economy recovers.

13. A longer-term policy response is needed to avert the need to rely once again on ad hoc emergency measures, which can, in some cases, exacerbate rather than mitigate negative effects.

14. The current global crisis is not only jeopardizing the development gains made thus far, but is also forcing an expanded focus, from lifting people out of poverty to preventing people from falling into poverty. Poverty, unemployment, underemployment and vulnerable employment in themselves are forms of social exclusion.

Social protection floor

15. What is really needed is the development of comprehensive social protection systems that can be established before another crisis strikes.

16. Countries with a comprehensive and effective social protection system can strengthen social integration and promote national competitiveness. Social and

health services, central components of a social protection system, play a vital role in increasing social cohesion and alleviating the impact of financial and economic crises. A first step towards integrating people living in poverty is to meet their basic needs.

17. But there is not a unique prescribed way to build and strengthen social protection systems. The specific details of such systems will vary across countries depending on their specific needs, existing social infrastructure and vulnerability patterns, and their technical and fiscal capacity to administer different types of programmes. Despite differences in implementation, however, it should be possible to agree on a common goal. A desirable goal for social protection systems is to capture all the people who are socially vulnerable and provide them with minimum grant levels.

18. A minimum floor of social security benefits for all citizens should include:

- A universal guarantee of access to basic health services
- Guaranteed income security for all children through family and/or child benefits
- Guaranteed access to basic means-tested or self-targeted social assistance for the poor and the unemployed
- Guaranteed income security for people in old age and invalidity through basic pensions

19. In the context of social protection, the International Council on Social Welfare is supporting the social protection floor initiative. The lead agencies are ILO and the World Health Organization. Most, if not all, United Nations agencies and the World Bank support the initiative. It is a great step forward in implementing programmes that will alleviate poverty. The main elements of the initiative are:

- Essential services, i.e., geographical and financial access to essential services, including water and sanitation, adequate nutrition, health, education and housing
- Essential social transfers, i.e., social transfers in cash and kind paid to the poor and vulnerable to provide a minimum income and healthy security

20. Social safety nets such as cash or in-kind government transfers to the poor are often temporary but necessary measures. These transfers can be conditional — provisions to families or individuals as a reward for actions such as attending school, participating in public works or having a medical check-up. Or they can be unconditional transfers, which do not depend upon recipient's behaviour.

21. But these measures cannot replace longer-term social protection schemes that will protect vulnerable peoples from this crisis as well as the next.

Damaging responses

22. Most developing countries still do not provide adequate social protection for their citizens. As a result, millions are resorting to limited, often harmful, coping mechanisms, especially in times of crisis, such as reducing meals, eating less nutritious foods, taking children out of school, selling livestock and other assets or borrowing money to feed their families.

23. In the case of sudden spikes in the price of food, the poor have to spend an even larger proportion of their income on food and will probably buy less food or food that is less nutritious.

24. Worse still, some are voluntarily selling, or being forced to sell, their labour and bodies in the trafficking trade, or what we call "irregular migration". This happened in the aftermath of the 1997 crisis, and there are indications that the same thing is happening now, perhaps on a larger scale.

25. Episodes of soaring commodity prices will recur in future, especially when the current recession retreats and the money from stimulus packages runs out. Thus a better and longer-term policy response to protect the poor and vulnerable must be put in place.

National responses and consequences

26. National approaches in identifying poverty groups affected by the economic crisis will vary considerably, but all will need to take into account the key criterion of exclusion from productive resources, decent work and social security in terms of health, education, safe water and sanitation and housing, as well as extreme vulnerability to higher food and fuel costs.

27. Enhancing the coverage of social protection is not only a moral imperative but also good economics. In times of crisis and uncertainty about the future, people tend to increase their savings to protect themselves against the risk of losing their jobs or suffering a loss of income. When millions of individuals react in the same way, they cause the crisis to deepen by decreasing aggregate domestic demand. Thus a behaviour that is natural and rational at the individual level is detrimental to the economy at the aggregate level. To reduce this adverse macroeconomic implication, it is necessary to induce a change of behaviour at the individual level. Therefore, enhancing the coverage of social protection will help people and economies. By providing a basic level of income support, social protection schemes make individuals feel more secure and less inclined to increase their savings to protect themselves from possible income losses in times of crisis, contributing to domestic demand and macroeconomic stability.

Policy priorities

28. There are at least three key sets of concerns that affected countries should prioritize in policymaking and programming.

29. The first relates to the impact on poverty numbers and poverty levels. How many are affected? Who are they, and where are they to be found?

30. The second relates to the major ways in which the poor are affected by the crisis and the remedial measures that most benefit them. Countries need to ensure that stabilization or social protection assistance programmes for regions, sectors and communities are well designed and robust. They need to be free from political bias or other forms of distortion that would reduce their efficiency and impact. Social protection measures need to be free of leakage or bias and must not be undermined by high administrative costs.

31. The last set of concerns relates to the relationship between poverty, inequality and the larger political economy in the longer run. This set is more complex because

it relates to the stumbling blocks, political as well as economic, to the legal empowerment of the poor:

- How much priority should Governments give to issues of redistribution during a period of prolonged economic recession or crisis and/or when government revenues are sharply reduced?
- How to ensure that spatial, occupational and group disparities are more efficiently addressed so that rising poverty does not lead to the destabilization of the economy or society

Conclusion

32. Finally, this is a global problem, and we need global and local solutions for the localized problems millions are experiencing. At the global level, donor Governments, from many of whose countries the current crisis originated, have more reasons now to keep their commitments to assist developing countries in the South. At the national and local levels, especially in the South, Governments must take this crisis as yet another opportunity to put in place comprehensive social protection systems for its peoples because it is the moral and economically right thing to do.